WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for processing data packets comprising:

receiving multiple types of data packets,

sending a first predetermined type of data packet to a first data path and a second predetermined type of data packet to a second data path, and

communicating in advance the types of data packets received to an arbitrator of a shared resource of the data paths.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

selecting how to handle the data packets based on the communicated types of data packets.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

selecting data packets for a shared resource of the data paths based on the communicated types of data packets.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

selecting a shared resource to send a data packet based on the communicated types of data packets.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein sending further comprises sending a third predetermined type of data packet to a third data path.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein communicating further comprises communicating the order that the data packets were received.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the first predetermined type of data packets are non-IP multicast packets and the second predetermined type of data packets are IP multicast packets.

8. A computer program product, disposed on a computer readable medium, for processing data packets comprising instructions for causing a processor to:

receive multiple types of data packets,

send a first predetermined type of data packet to a first data path and a second predetermined type of data packet to a second data path, and

communicate in advance the types of data packets received to an arbitrator of a shared resource of the data paths.

9. The program of claim 8 further comprises instruction for causing a processor to:

select how to handle the data packets based on the communicated types of data packets.

10. The program of claim 8 further comprises instruction for causing a processor to:

select data packets for a shared resource of the data paths based on the communicated types of data packets.

11. The program of claim 8 further comprises instruction for causing a processor to:

select a shared resource to send a data packet based on the communicated types of data packets.

12. The program of claim 8 further comprises instruction for causing a processor to:

send a third predetermined type of data packet to a third data path.

13. The program of claim 8 further comprises instruction for causing a processor to:

communicate further comprises communicating the order that the data packets were received.

14. The program of claim 8 wherein the first predetermined type of data packets are non-IP multicast packets and the second predetermined type of data packets are IP multicast packets.

15. A system for processing a data packet, the system comprising:

at least one communication port;

at least one Ethernet MAC (Medium Access Control) device coupled to at least one of the at least one communication ports;

at least one processor having access to at least one Ethernet MAC device; and instructions for causing at least one processor to:

receive multiple types of data packets,

send a first predetermined type of data packet to a first data path and a second predetermined type of data packet to a second data path, and

communicate in advance the types of data packets received to an arbitrator of a shared resource of the data paths.

16. The system of claim 15 further comprises instruction for causing at least one processor to:

select how to handle the data packets based on the communicated types of data packets.

17. The system of claim 15 further comprises instruction for causing at least one processor to:

select data packets for a shared resource of the data paths based on the communicated types of data packets.

18. The system of claim 15 further comprises instruction for causing at least one processor to:

select a shared resource to send a data packet based on the communicated types of data packets.

19. The system of claim 15 further comprises instruction for causing at least one processor to:

send a third predetermined type of data packet to a third data path.

20. The system of claim 15 further comprises instruction for causing at least one processor to:

communicate further comprises communicating the order that the data packets were received.

21. The system of claim 15 wherein the first predetermined type of data packets are non-IP multicast packets and the second predetermined type of data packets are IP multicast packets.

22. A device for processing data packets comprising:

a module to receive multiple types of data packets,

a module to send a first predetermined type of data packet to a first data path and a second predetermined type of data packet to a second data path, and

a module to communicate in advance the types of data packets received to an arbitrator of a shared resource of the data paths.

23. The device of claim 22 further comprises:

a module to select how to handle the data packets based on the communicated types of data packets.

24. The device of claim 22 further comprises:

a module to select data packets for a shared resource of the data paths based on the communicated types of data packets.

25. The device of claim 22 further comprises:

a module to select a shared resource to send a data packet based on the communicated types of data packets.

26. The device of claim 22 further comprises:

a module to send a third predetermined type of data packet to a third data path.

123 27. The device of claim 22 wherein the module to communicate further comprises:
124 communicating the order that the data packets were received.
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28. The device of claim 22 wherein the first predetermined type of data packets are non-IP multicast packets and the second predetermined type of data packets are IP multicast packets.